

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /031 W
----- 033705

O R 051115Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7582

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 11905

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, VS, CB, SN, ENRG

SUBJECT: GVN/GKR DISPUTE OVER OFFSHORE AREAS -- GKR WEIGHING
HOW TO DEAL WITH GVN THREAT TO STOP DRILLING FORCIBLY

REFS: A. PHNOM PENH 11839 (NOTAL)
B. SAIGON 11589 (NOTAL)
C. PHNOM PENH 10638 (NOTAL)
D. PHNOM PENH 10291 (NOTAL)
E. SAIGON 9520 (NOTAL)
F. SINGAPORE 3624 (NOTAL)

1. MINISTER OF INDUSTRY CALLED IN EMBASSY OFFICER MORNING
SEPTEMBER 5 TO DISCUSS LATEST DEVELOPMENTS FOLLOWING GVN DE-
MARCHE. HE HAD RECEIVED FULL TEXT OF FORMAL GVN NOTE (THAT
DESCRIBED REFTTEL A WAS A SUMMARY SENT BY GKR EMBASSY IN SAIGON).
NOTE, IN ADDITION TO DEMANDING CESSATION OF DRILLING AND
EVACUATION WITHIN FIFTEEN DAYS, INCLUDES STATEMENT THAT IF
DEMAND NOT COMPLIED WITH WITHIN THE FIFTEEN DAYS,
SVN NAVY WILL BE SENT TO EXPEL ELF-ESSO RIG FROM DRILLING
SITE. MINISTER ADDED HE HAD HEARD THAT VOA THIS
MORNING HAD REPORTED SVN NAVY HAD ALREADY BEEN DISPATCHED.

2. MINISTER COMMENTED THAT, ALTHOUGH LAST SENTENCE OF
FORMAL NOTE EXPRESSES HOPE THAT PROBLEM CAN BE SOLVED
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THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS, THREAT TO SEND NAVY WITHIN

SPECIFIED TIME PERIOD MAKES THIS SENTIMENT SOMEWHAT HOLLOW. FIFTEEN DAY PERIOD STARTS FROM DATE OF NOTE WHICH IS AUGUST 29; ACCORDINGLY DEADLINE EXPIRES ONE WEEK FROM TODAY, OR SEPTEMBER 12. IF GVN HAD BEEN LESS SPECIFIC, FOR EXAMPLE HAD NOT THREATENED TO USE FORCE OR HAD REQUESTED ELF-ESSO DEPARTURE IN THE "SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME", THIS WOULD LEAVE ROOM FOR MANEUVER. NOW THERE IS VERY LITTLE. MINISTER REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT IF GVN DOES USE ITS NAVY TO EXPEL ELF-ESSO, THEN GKR WILL BE OBLIGED TO RETALIATE WITH ITS OWN, "WIN OR LOSE."

3. MINISTER SHOWED EMBASSY GKR CORRESPONDENCE REQUESTING NEGOTIATIONS WITH GVN (REFTEL A). GKR FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD WRITTEN SVN AMBASSADOR AUGUST 13, POINTING OUT THAT GKR WAS DRILLING IN AREA NORTH OF LINE SUGGESTED BY GVN ITSELF (REFTELS C, D AND E), PROPOSING DISCUSSIONS IN SAIGON AND SAYING THAT GKR HOPED TO RESOLVE PROBLEM WITH GVN THROUGH DISCUSSIONS IN SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AS BEFITS GOOD NEIGHBORS.

4. MINISTER DESCRIBED HIS DISCUSSION WITH SVN AMBASSADOR PHUOC ON SEPTEMBER 4. AMBASSADOR PROFESSED HIMSELF ASTONISHED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT (A) HAD NOT RESPONDED TO GKR REQUEST FOR NEGOTIATIONS AND (B) HAD NOW REACTED WITH THIS BELLIGERENT ULTIMATUM. MINISTER SAID THAT HE HAD EXPLAINED GKR'S CONTINUING WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE AND THE FACT THAT GKR DRILLING IN AREA ALREADY IN EFFECT CEDED BY GVN. AMBASSADOR PROMISED HE WOULD CABLE SUBSTANCE OF CONVERSATION THAT AFTERNOON AND RECOMMEND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT NOT USE ITS NAVY.

5. GKR IS BEING PRESSED BY REPORTERS, LOCAL AND FOREIGN, FOR ITS REACTION. MINISTER SAID THAT AT MARSHAL LON NOL'S ORDER, GKR POLICY IS TO REMAIN CALM, AND NOT TAKE OFFICIAL POSITION FOR TIME BEING. (MINISTER CONVEYED THESE INSTRUCTIONS TO ACTING MINISTER OF INFORMATION BY TELEPHONE IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICER). MARSHAL HAS ALSO DISPATCHED CONFIDENTIAL

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HIS PRIVATE PLANE TO SAIGON TO BRING BACK GKR AMBASSADOR FOR CONSULTATIONS.

6. MINISTER, OBVIOUSLY AT A LOSS AS TO WHAT TO DO NEXT, ASKED WHAT EMBASSY VIEWS WERE AND WHETHER DEPARTMENT OF STATE COULD TAKE SOME STEPS TO FORESTALL GVN USE OF FORCE. THE MINISTER SAID THAT WITHOUT THE GVN THREAT TO USE NAVY IN A SPECIFIC TIME FRAME, A

THREAT WHICH IS NOW IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, THE GKR AND GVN COULD SORT THIS OUT BY THEMSELVES. BUT THE GVN BY ITS ACTIONS HAS VIRTUALLY FORECLOSED THIS. THE MINISTER IMPLIED STRONGLY THAT OUTSIDE PRESSURE ON THE GVN WAS NECESSARY.

7. CHMEDTC DISCUSSED MATTER SEPARATELY SEPTEMBER 5 WITH FANK C-IN-C SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ AND NAVY COMMANDER VONG SARENDY. BOTH WERE ANGRY AT GVN ACTION, BUT WERE NOT CONTEMPLATING TAKING ANY ACTION THEMSELVES. CHMEDTC COUNSELLED THEM TO REMAIN COOL AND ALLOW TWO GOVERNMENTS TO WORK THE MATTER OUT. THEY SEEMED RECEPTIVE TO THIS APPROACH.

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8. GKR ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER HOU HONG HAS GIVEN US URGENT MESSAGES TO TRANSMIT TO PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET IN BEIRUT AND FOREIGN MINISTER KEUKY LIM IN GENEVA INFORMING THEM OF THE GVN ULTIMATUM AND ASKING THEIR ADVICE. WE HAVE TRANSMITTED THESE MESSAGES BY SEPTELS. (KEUKY LIM MIGHT BE IN PARIS.)

9. AT MEETING WITH MARSHAL LON NOL SEPTEMBER 5 ON OTHER SUBJECTS, CHARGE RAISED MATTER OF GVN "ULTIMATUM". IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE MARSHAL WAS NOT ENTIRELY UP-TO-DATE ON SUBJECT, AS HE INSISTED THAT THE GVN DIPLOMATIC

NOTE HAD NOT YET BEEN RECEIVED IN PHNOM PENH. HE SAID THE GKR HAD LEARNED ONLY UNOFFICIALLY OF THE GVN "PROTEST". AT THE SAME TIME THE MARSHAL CHARACTERIZED THE GVN PROTEST AS "SOMEWHAT BRUTAL". THE MARSHAL MADE SEVERAL ALLUSIONS TO PAST HISTORY OF THIS AFFAIR, FOR EXAMPLE STATING THAT THE ORIGINAL CONCESSION HAD BEEN GRANTED BY PRINCE SIHANOUK AND WAS THEREFORE NOT THE DOING OF HIS GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO BLAMED THE BOUNDARIES OF CAMBODIA'S TERRITORIAL WATERS ON FAILURES FOR WHICH THE FRENCH COLONIAL ADMINISTRATORS WERE RESPONSIBLE.

10. THE CHARGE STRESSED TO THE MARSHAL THAT THE BEST WAY OUT OF THIS PROBLEM WOULD BE TO PROPOSE TO THE SOUTH
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VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT THE SETTING ASIDE OF ITS "ULTIMATUM" AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE. THE CHARGE SAID THE OUTCOME TO BE AVOIDED WAS A MILITARY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN TWO FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS WHO WERE FIGHTING A COMMON ENEMY. THE MARSHAL AGREED THAT THE SITUATION CALLED FOR DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGE WITH SAIGON AND DISCUSSIONS RATHER THAN MILITARY ACTION.

11. COMMENT: GKR OBVIOUSLY HAS LITTLE TASTE FOR PUBLIC CONFRONTATION ON THIS ISSUE, AND IS RATHER SHOCKED AND BEWILDERED AT MOTIVES FOR WHAT IT CONCEIVES AS VIETNAMESE BAD FAITH IN TRYING TO GRAB DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF CAMBODIA' ALL TOO NARROW WEDGE OF CONTINENTAL SHELF. THERE IS ANOTHER OMINOUS OVERTONE, GVN FIFTEEN-DAY ULTIMATUM FROM AUGUST 29 EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 12, DAY BEFORE NEXT TRIPARTITE MEETING TO DISCUSS MEKONG CONVOY ARRANGEMENTS. OBVIOUSLY, IF THIS ISSUE IS NOT RESOLVED BEFORE THEN, IT MIGHT FURNISH GVN AN EXCUSE TO CANCEL TRIPARTITE MEETING AND IN EFFECT GET OUT OF THE MEKONG CONVOY ESCORTING BUSINESS, A SITUATION WHICH WOULD BE CLEARLY UNACCEPTABLE TO US IN TERMS OF ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES IN CAMBODIA. ACCORDINGLY, WE HOPE THAT DEPARTMENT CAN FIND A WAY TO PERSUADE GVN TO LIFT ITS ULTIMATUM AND PERMIT NEGOTIATIONS TO BEGIN NOW.
KEELEY

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